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Is zero focalization reducible to variable internal and external focalization?

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Is zero focalization reducible to variable internal and external focalization?

Introduction

Genette's theory of focalization dominates current narratological discussion of perspective, or point of view, in narrative. As is well known, Genette introduces three new terms to the discussion: internal focalization, external focalization and zero focalization. Explicit definitions of the terms are absent from both *Narrative Discourse* (1980 [1972]) and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1988 [1983]). However, Genette makes it clear (or so we believe) that they are meant to cover the three instances of an already well established »three term typology«:

[T]he consensus settles with no great difficulty on a three-term typology. The first term [zero focalization] corresponds to what English-language criticism calls the narrative with omniscient narrator and Pouillon calls »vision from behind,« and which Todorov symbolizes by the formula *Narrator > Character* (where the narrator knows more than the character, or more exactly *says* more than any of the characters knows). In the second term [internal focalization], *Narrator = Character* (the narrator says only what a given character knows); this is the narrative with »point of view« after Lubbock, or with »restricted field« after Blin; Pouillon calls it »vision with.« In the third term [external focalization], *Narrator < Character* (the narrator says less than the character knows); this is the »objective« or »behaviorist« narrative, what Pouillon calls »vision from without.«¹

In response to criticism raised by Mieke Bal, Genette concedes in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* that zero focalization may have a peculiar status in his typology. Upon a paraphrase of Bal's criticism, he comments:

That obviously means that the analysis of a »non-focalized« narrative must always be reducible to a mosaic of variously focalized segments and, therefore, that »zero focalization« = *variable focalization*. That formula would not bother me in the least, but it seems to me that classical narrative sometimes places its »focus« at a point so indefinite, or so remote, with so panoramic a field (the well-known »viewpoint of God« [...]) that it cannot coincide with any character and that the term nonfocalization, or zero focalization, is rather more appropriate for it.²

Thus, Genette is not entirely hostile to the idea that »zero focalization« can actually be defined in terms of (variable) internal and external focalization, but he also invokes some reservation.

1 | Gérard Genette: *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*. Ithaca / New York 1980.

2 | Gérard Genette: *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Ithaca / New York 1988, p. 73. Bal's criticism can be found in Mieke Bal: »The Narrating and the Focalizing: A Theory of the Agents in Narrative«. In: *Style* 17 (1983), p. 234–269. On Bal's own concept of focalization, cf. Wilhelmus Bronzwaer: »Mieke Bal's Concept of Focalization: A Critical Note«. In: *Poetics Today* 2 (1981), p. 193–201. Bal's comments on Bronzwaer can be found in Mieke Bal: »The Laughing Mice: Or: On Focalization«. In: *Poetics Today* 2 (1981), p. 202–210, p. 205.

We have found no study that systematically addresses the question whether ›zero focalization‹ is reducible to (variable) internal and/or external focalization in the narratological literature. Some narratologists seem to have embraced the idea that ›zero focalization‹ can be defined in terms of – and hence is nothing but – (variable) internal and/or external focalization.³ Others reject the notion of zero focalization altogether, typically on the basis of the claim that any narrative is focalized in one way or the other, i.e. that there's always *some* perspective present in the text.⁴ Given that being expressive of someone's perspective is sufficient for internal focalization,⁵ this also amounts to the claim that zero focalization reduces to internal focalization (variable or not). Finally, we have encountered at least one explicit statement to the effect that zero focalization *cannot* be defined in terms of variable internal focalization.⁶

So, is zero focalization reducible to internal focalization or to variable internal and/or external focalization? In this paper, we shall provide some explicit arguments that it is not. Before we proceed, it will be useful to be a bit more precise about our claim and about how we will back it up (in order not to raise false hopes, or fears, concerning our subject matter).

The claim that some notion (such as ›zero focalization‹) can be reduced to some other notions (such as ›internal focalization‹ or ›external focalization‹) is a claim about

3 | Cf. Marjet Berendsen: »The Teller and the Observer: Narration and Focalization in Narrative Texts«. In: *Style* 18 (1984), p. 140–158, p. 141: »The problem is that Genette's zero focalization is not really a separate category but a mixture of internal and external focalization. [...] Therefore, this notion is completely redundant.« Edward Branigan: *Narrative Comprehension and Film*. London, New York 1992, p. 107: »Nonfocalization in Genette's sense might better be called ›multifocalization‹.« Geir Farner takes Genette to have »zero focalization merge with variable focalization« (Geir Farner: *Literary Fiction. The Ways We Read Narrative Literature*. London 2014, p. 254). Cf. also Manfred Jahn: »Windows of Focalization: Deconstructing and Reconstruction a Narratological Concept«. In: *Style* 30 (1996), p. 241–267, p. 249 [§ 10]. Interestingly, for our purposes, in her reply to Bronzwaer, Bal claims: »non-focalisé means for Genette focalized in a diffuse way« (Laughing Mice (ref. 2), p. 205) which still seems to express the view that zero focalization is some sort of focalization, albeit a »diffuse« one.

4 | Patrick O'Neill: »Points of Origin: On Focalization in Narrative«. In: *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* CRCL 19.3 (1992), p. 331–350, p. 335 (»External narrators [...] are always present [...]. It follows that in every narrative everything is primarily focalized by this world-creating narrative agent«); Göran Nieragden: »Focalization and Narration: Theoretical and Terminological Refinements«. In: *Poetics Today* 23 (2002), p. 685–697, p. 689 (»Genette's concept of ›Zero-Focalization‹ is commonly dropped because of the convincing argumentation against the possibility of a nonfocalized text«).

5 | This claim seems to follow from standard definitions of ›internal focalization‹, such as the one given in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*: »In internal focalization, the presentation of events is restricted to the point of view, perception, and cognition of a focal character« (Manfred Jahn: »Focalization«. In: David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. London, New York 2005, p. 173–177, p. 173).

6 | William F. Edmiston: »Focalization and the First-Person Narrator: A Revision of the Theory«. In: *Poetics Today* 10 (1989), p. 729–744, p. 738, holds that for zero-focalization, »[t]here is no restriction on the narrator who can say more than any character could perceive. The term [zero-focalization] cannot therefore be equated with ›variable internal focalization‹, as Chatman suggests«. Edmiston refers to Seymour Chatman: »Characters and Narrators: Filter, Center, Slant, and Interst-Focus«. In: *Poetics Today* 7, p. 189–204, but it is doubtful whether Chatman actually wants to make any clear suggestion along these lines. William Nelles: »Getting Focalization into Focus«. In: *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), p. 365–382, p. 371, claims à propos his discussion of zero focalization that »it is probably the case that almost every narrative could be read as an example of variable focalization«, thereby allowing for narratives which do not allow for this possibility.

a relationship between some notions, or concepts.⁷ But not just any relationship: if you claim that some notion X is reducible to some other notions Y, Z, ..., then you are claiming that X can be defined in terms of Y, Z, Hence we can define the notion of reducibility as follows:

(DR) A notion X is reducible to some other notions Y, Z, ..., if, and only if, X can be defined in terms of Y, Z,

This definition gives us the truth conditions for all theses about the reducibility of all notions. The thesis we are interested in is this (dubbed »RT« for Reducibility Thesis):

(RT) Zero focalization can be reduced to internal focalization and/or external focalization.

We believe that RT is wrong. So we're in the business of falsification of RT.

In sum, then, and more specifically, in this paper we show that a particular relation (namely the reducibility relation as defined by DR) between three particular concepts does not hold.

Next, let's explain just *how* we shall go about falsifying RT.

First, and obviously, whether RT is true or not depends on the definitions of (types of) focalization you feed into it. After all, RT, as we have just explained, *is* nothing but a claim about some concepts, and how they are (inter-)defined. The very meaning, in other words, of RT depends on how you define (types of) focalization in the first place. That fact marks an obvious burden for our paper, and also an obvious limit of our results. The burden is this. We need to get clear about the definition of (types of) focalization that we take RT to be about. There are many definitions of ›focalization‹ out there. We cannot consider all of them. We shall limit ourselves to the discussion of two: firstly, the definitions of (types of) focalization that can be taken out of Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (by not too much of a hermeneutic stretch); these definitions are also widely adopted in current narratology (and equally often also ascribed to Genette, see note 10 below, for references). For these definitions, our thesis is this:

(T1) Given the account of focalization cited by Genette, zero focalization is not reducible to internal or external focalization.

Secondly, we also believe, and shall subsequently argue, that

(T2) The account of focalization cited by Genette is flawed.

We therefore consider a rather obvious amendment of this account. It amounts to this (one thesis, T3, concerning internal focalization, and one thesis, T4, concerning external focalization):

(T3) If a passage of text is internally focalized, then it presents what some character thinks, sees, hopes, dreams, etc.

(T4) If a passage of text is externally focalized relative to some character C, then it does not present what C thinks, sees, hopes, dreams, etc.

The next theses (T5 to T8) constitute the backbone of our argument to the effect that RT is also false with regard to the definitions of ›internal focalization‹ and ›external focalization‹ that are provided by (T3) and (T4), respectively:

7 | It is, if you like, a meta-linguistic claim. We will come back in a minute to some things this claim does not involve and to some accordant limits of the aims of our paper. Note also that sometimes it is easy to conflate meta-linguistic claims and other claims, cf. note 24 below, for an example of this danger.

- (T5) Some passages of text are neither internally nor externally focalized.
- (T6) If a passage of text is neither internally nor externally focalized, then it is zero focalized.
- (T7) Zero focalization is not reducible to internal or external focalization.
- (T8) A text that wholly consists of internally or externally focalized passages can be zero focalized.

The remainder of this paper is devoted to spelling out these theses in more detail, and providing a rationale for each of them. (We have numbered our theses in their order of appearance in our argument below. None of the theses is redundant, they are all essential to our refutation of RT.)

Let us now turn to a rather obvious limit of our result. We have already announced it and alluded to it, now it's time to make it fully explicit. Our refutation of RT is shown to be true only for the definitions of (types of) focalization as supplied, firstly, by (our exegesis of) Genette and, secondly, by T2 and T3, respectively. Take other definitions and the result may be different, i.e. RT may turn out true for them.⁸

So let us now conclude our introductory remarks with one further cautionary note: This is a paper in taxonomy. There are many things connected to the wide and varied field of research on focalization that this paper is not about, such as, e.g., textual analyses, a detailed exegesis of Genette's work, a review of general research in focalization, among many, many other things. Even our claims concerning the definition of (types of) focalization will be restricted to what is absolutely necessary in order to get our taxonomic claim – the refutation of RT – across.

However, while taxonomy is essentially different from all these things, it has something to do with some of them. Let's consider textual analysis. Conceptual economy – i.e. limiting your descriptive resources to what is necessary and avoiding redundancies – may be a benefit for practical purposes. (Applying two concepts is faster than applying three, to say the least.) Also, taxonomic questions should play a role when it comes to defining terms.⁹ So maybe spending some systematic thoughts on the truth of RT is not so bad after all?

But be that as it may – enough now with our introduction – it has lasted much too long, already –; it is high time now to back up our theses! To this we shall now turn.

(T1) Given the account of focalization cited by Genette, zero focalization is not reducible to internal or external focalization.

Our rationale for thesis (T1) consists in a counter example against the claim that zero focalization is reducible to internal or external focalization. Let us remind ourselves that

8 | So here is a convenient proposal for a follow up paper to ours: Take other definitions as a basis and show that RT is true for them. A reviewer for *Textpraxis*, if we understood him correctly, has suggested to us that this works for the definitions of (types of) focalization proposed by S. Rimmon-Kenan. We welcome responses to our paper that prove him right. Still, note that showing that RT is true for certain definitions of (types of) focalization does not show that it is also true for other definitions of (types of) focalization. So, if it can be shown that RT is true for some definitions that are not considered by us, this does not prove us wrong. It merely proves the point we make in this very paragraph: namely that the *scope* of our results is limited, and not that our theses are not true.

9 | Cf. Tilman Köppe and Jan Stühling: »Two Approaches to Defining Internal, External, and Zero-Focalization«. To appear in: *Semiotica*. An ahead of print publication is accessible at: <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/semi.ahead-of-print/sem-2016-0056/sem-2016-0056.xml> (last visit 18.03.2016).

if zero focalization is reducible to internal and external focalization, then zero focalized texts consist of internally and externally focalized parts. From the above-quoted passage from *Narrative Discourse* (cf. p. 188–89), we can extract the following definitions of internal, external, and zero focalization:

- a. Internal focalization: A sentence (or passage, or text) is internally focalized if, and only if, its reader is told only what a given character knows.
- b. External focalization: A sentence (or passage, or text) is externally focalized if, and only if, its reader is told less than the character knows.
- c. Zero focalization: A sentence (or passage, or text) is zero focalized if, and only if, its reader is told more than any of the characters knows.¹⁰

Now, it is surely possible that a text tells its readers more than any of the characters know and that all the sentences are either internally or externally focalized. This is easily achieved by a text which tells us what a particular character (exclusively) believes and subsequently tells us what another character (exclusively) believes. Such a text shows that a text can fulfill the criteria of both $c_{\text{zero focalization}}$ and $a_{\text{internal focalization}}$. However, if a text contains a sentence which does say more than any of the characters know, then this sentence is, according to $c_{\text{zero focalization}}$, zero focalized, while it does not fulfill the criteria for either $a_{\text{internal focalization}}$ or $b_{\text{external focalization}}$. We conclude that on the account cited by Genette zero focalization cannot be reduced to internal and external focalization.

Note that there is a subtle difference between our line of reasoning and the common claim that that zero focalization cannot be equated with variable internal focalization, for with zero-focalization, ›there are no restrictions on the narrator, who can say more than any character could perceive.‹¹¹ Given that a narrator is also a character (and what else *could* it be?),¹² then arguably the reader is told only what this narrator-character knows, which in turn makes the respective passage an instance of $a_{\text{internal focalization}}$, rather than $c_{\text{zero focalization}}$.¹³

10 | In Köppe and Stühling: ›Two Approaches‹ (ref. 9) we argue at some length that these definitions of focalization are widely adopted in current narratology, and that is why we start our taxonomic enterprise with them. But we need to stress again (as we have at the beginning of our essay) that Genette does not offer explicit definitions in his *Narrative Discourse* (nor in his *Narrative Discourse Revisited*). If he does not subscribe to what we take to be reasonable reconstructions of the account of focalization to be found in *Narrative Discourse*, then this is not an essay about the reducibility of his account of focalization (but rather an essay about RT regarding some account of focalization that is widely adopted in the literature). Also, we have dropped reference to a narrator in these definitions, because we think that making such a reference unnecessarily weakens the definitions (cf. Tilman Köppe and Jan Stühling: ›Against Pan-Narrator Theories‹. In: *Journal of Literary Semantics* 40 (2011), p. 59–80). For the following, nothing much depends on this choice.

11 | Cf. above, note 6.

12 | We argue for this controversial claim at some length in Köppe and Stühling: ›Pan-Narrator Theories‹ (10). Note that narrator-characters need not possess any qualities beyond the very quality of, according to the fiction, narrating the text of the work. Accordingly, on our theory, once it is true in the fiction that there is a ›voice‹ narrating the story, it is true that there is a narrator in the fiction. To take another example: it is also sufficient for there being a narrator in the fiction if there is a dog, or a cross, or a pumpernickel, narrating the story. It is narratorial instances of these kinds that have been at the focus of so called *Unnatural Narratology*, see Tobias Klauk and Tilman Köppe: ›Reassessing Unnatural Narratology. Problems and Prospects‹. In: *Storyworlds* 5 (2013), p. 77–100, for a review of the program.

13 | Compare John Morreall on the idea of a narrator with an ›omniscient point of view‹: ›To have a view or perspective is to see things from one angle *rather than another*. For vision and for knowledge generally, to have a point of view is to know partially and serially. Omniscience is precisely knowing *without a point of view*; it is knowing everything completely and simultaneously. And so omniscience

Note also that this line of reasoning is different from Genette's. In the above-quoted passage, he invokes the idea that zero focalization involves a »focus« at a point so indefinite, or so remote, with so panoramic a field (the well-known ›viewpoint of God« [...]) that it cannot coincide with any character«. First, according to $c_{\text{zero focalization}}$ it is both necessary and sufficient for zero focalization that the reader is told more than any of the characters knows; it is not necessary that the reader is told more than any of the characters *can* know. Second, perfectly mundane sentences such as »The apple lies on the table« can fulfill criterion $c_{\text{zero focalization}}$ and this sentence surely does not presuppose, or otherwise somehow imply, »the well-known ›viewpoint of God«.

(T2) *The account of focalization cited by Genette is flawed.*

This thesis has already been established elsewhere,¹⁴ so we may be brief. We assume that no sentence can be both internally and externally focalized relative to a particular character. However, if a sentence tells us less than this character knows (cf. $b_{\text{external focalization}}$), then it also does not tell us more than this character knows (cf. $a_{\text{internal focalization}}$).¹⁵ Consequently, according to the definitions of types of focalization we have distilled from Genette's account, every sentence that is externally focalized relative to a particular character is also internally focalized relative to this character. Hence these definitions are flawed.

(T3) *If a passage of text is internally focalized, then it presents what some character thinks, sees, hopes, dreams, etc.*

Thesis (T2) calls for refined definitions of types of focalization.¹⁶ We shall not aim at giving a complete definition of internal focalization here, but rather give two necessary conditions for it; this is enough for the purposes of this paper. According to Genette, »focalization is essentially [...] a restriction«. ¹⁷ His basic idea concerning internal focalization is that the information conveyed by an internally focalized sentence (or passage, or text) is restricted by the content of the (intentional) mental states of the focal character.¹⁸ These

could not provide a filter for a story in the way that the limited knowledge of an internal narrator does. ›Omniscient point of view,« in short, is an oxymoron.« (John Morreall: »The Myth of the Omniscient Narrator«. In: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994), p. 429–435, p. 432) We believe that Morreall is correct in this, and that's why we think that once we have a narrator, we also have this narrator's perspective, hence internal focalization (cf. Genette: *Narrative Rev.* (ref. 2), p. 77f.).

14 | Cf. Andreas Kablitz: »Erzählperspektive – Point of View – Focalisation«. In: *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 98 (1988), p. 237–255, p. 244; Gregory Currie: »Narration, Imitation, and Point of View«. In: Gary L. Hagberg and Walter Jost (eds.): *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*. Malden, Oxford 2010, p. 331–349, p. 336; Köppe and Stühling: »Two Approaches« (ref. 9).

15 | We take it that the phrase »is told only« as in ($a_{\text{internal focalization}}$) is equivalent to »is not told more«.

16 | For the following definitions, cf. Köppe and Stühling: »Two Approaches« (ref. 9).

17 | Genette: *Narrative Discourse* (ref. 1), p. 192; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 185–86, and Genette: *Narrative Rev.* (ref. 2), p. 74.

18 | On the concept of intentional mental states cf., e.g., John R. Searle: *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge 1983. Remember that we believe that a narrator is also a character (see notes 12 and 13 above). Accordingly, for those who wish to distinguish between »narrator-focalizer« and »character-focalizer«, we can rephrase our sentence above as follows: »His basic idea concerning internal focalization is that the information conveyed by an internally focalized sentence (or passage, or text) is restricted by the content of the (intentional) mental states of the focal

states include e.g. the character's perceptions, her beliefs, hopes, thoughts, dreams, etc. Accordingly, in internally focalized passages of text, the reader is not told anything the focal character does not perceive, believe, hope, think, dream, etc.¹⁹ This is a necessary condition for internal focalization. As far as we can see, this is also a basic assumption in much theorizing about internal focalization.

Note that, principally, any intelligible sentence can be internally focalized. The reason is simple. A sentence is intelligible if it is possible to understand it. And in order to understand a sentence, its content must be mentally represented. Thus any intelligible sentence can be the content of a person's belief, hope, dream, wish, etc.

In order for a sentence to be *actually* internally focalized in a given work of fiction, the work of which the sentence is a part must be such that interpreting the sentence as not internally focalized is incorrect. This is a second necessary condition for internal focalization.²⁰

(T4) If a passage of text is externally focalized relative to some character C, then it does not present what C thinks, sees, hopes, dreams, etc.

If some character is described in external focalization, then her looks, utterances, gestures, facial expression etc. can be described, but the respective passage of text does not tell its readers what goes on in the character's mind. This is a necessary condition for external focalization.

(T5) Some passages of text are neither internally nor externally focalized.

This can be shown by considering an example:²¹

Unbeknownst to anybody, somewhere in the Black Forest something completely dull happened this moment: a stone rolled around a hill.

character (i.e. narrator-focalizer or character-focalizer).« For a brief discussion on whether narrators can be focalizers, see Tobias Klauk and Tilman Köppe: »Puzzles and Problems for the Theory of Focalization«, section 8. In: Jan Christoph Meister et al. (eds.): *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. URL: <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/discussion/puzzles-and-problems-theory-focalization> (last visit 29.12.2011).

19 | Of course the passage might suggest such things, but that is a different matter.

20 | We may also add that if a passage of text *T* is internally focalized relative to some character *C*, then reading *T* as an expression of *C*'s thoughts, perceptions, hopes, dreams etc. amounts to a better interpretation of *T* than any other interpretation according to which *T* is not such an expression.

21 | Why can the truth of T5 be established by way of an example? Because T5 is (what logicians call) an existential statement. It means, roughly, that there is at least one passage of text such that this passage is neither internally nor externally focalized. So what about our choice of just this example? The example is quite dull. Does this affect its argumentative force? No. The existential statement is meant to confirm, luckily, does not contain any reference to the aesthetic quality of the text. Is it a problem that we penned it ourselves? No, for quite the same reasons. The existential statement is meant to confirm, luckily, does not contain any reference to the author or authors of the text. (Cf. Gottfried Gabriel: *Logik und Rhetorik der Erkenntnis. Zum Verhältnis von wissenschaftlicher und ästhetischer Weltauffassung*. Paderborn 1997, ch. 8, for some general remarks on both the choice of examples and their role in argumentation.) Note also that the conceptual work we are doing in this essay is meant to apply to any narrative, past, present and future (ours and yours) and not only to those that have already been written by somebody. (We nevertheless welcome responses to this paper with more alluring example work.)

As indicated by the italicized part of the sentence (»Unbeknownst to anybody«), this sentence is not externally focalized, since it explicitly informs its readers about some aspect of the mental state of all characters.²²

Moreover, we can expand the example by establishing that the sentence is not part of a text that justifies a reading of it as an expression of someone's thought, belief, wish, dream, etc.²³ Thus, the sentence is not internally focalized, because the second necessary condition for internal focalization is not satisfied (cf. above, T₃).

(T6) If a passage of text is neither internally nor externally focalized, then it is zero focalized.

Genette holds that zero focalization consists in the absence of focalization. This is not the same as the absence of *any* restriction on the information to be given to the reader. Rather, since it is the absence of *focalization* that matters, it amounts to the absence of the restrictions of information characteristic of internal and external focalization (since, according to Genette, internal and external focalization exhaust the field of focalization types).

From this it follows that the above quoted example sentence (»Unbeknownst to anybody, somewhere in the Black Forest something completely dull happened this moment: a stone rolled around a hill.«) is zero focalized.

(T7) Zero focalization is not reducible to internal or external focalization.

Our rationale for this thesis parallels the one provided for T₁ (only now do we have a more plausible account of types of focalization as our basis). If zero focalization is reducible to internal and external focalization, then zero focalized texts (or passages, or sentences) consist of internally or externally focalized parts. But there are zero focalized sentences which do not consist of such parts (our dull example sentence being a case in point). Therefore, zero focalization is not reducible to internal or external focalization.

(T8) A text that wholly consists of internally or externally focalized passages can be zero focalized.

Suppose that only texts that do not contain *any* internally or externally focalized passages (or sentences) are zero focalized; under this condition, zero focalized texts would be rather rare. Arguably, most, if not all, novels do contain one internally or externally focalized sentence or the other.

Genette wants to call texts which feature many characters and shifts in internal focalization »zero focalized«, because here we may have the impression that for these texts, *taken as a whole*, the information that the reader gets is not restricted.²⁴ This, it seems

22 | Let us, for the sake of the argument, assume that there is no hidden quantifier restricting the scope of »anybody«. In other words, *ex hypothesi*, it is true in the fiction that there is really no character in the know about the existence and whereabouts of the stone.

23 | Strictly speaking, we may also have to add that the text is not unreliably narrated.

24 | Cf. Branigan: *Narrative* (ref. 3), p. 107. In his *Narrative Discourse* (ref. 1), p. 192, Genette claims that »the division between variable focalization and nonfocalization [i.e. zero focalization] is sometimes very difficult to establish, for the nonfocalized narrative can most often be analyzed as a narrative

to us, is a reasonable suggestion, and it seems to accord to a common practice in literary studies.

This concludes our discussion of the question whether zero focalization can be reduced to internal or external focalization.²⁵

that is multifocalized *ad libitum*«. Note that here, Genette is not concerned with the reducibility thesis (RT) but rather with the epistemic issue of how to analyze/classify particular narratives.

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